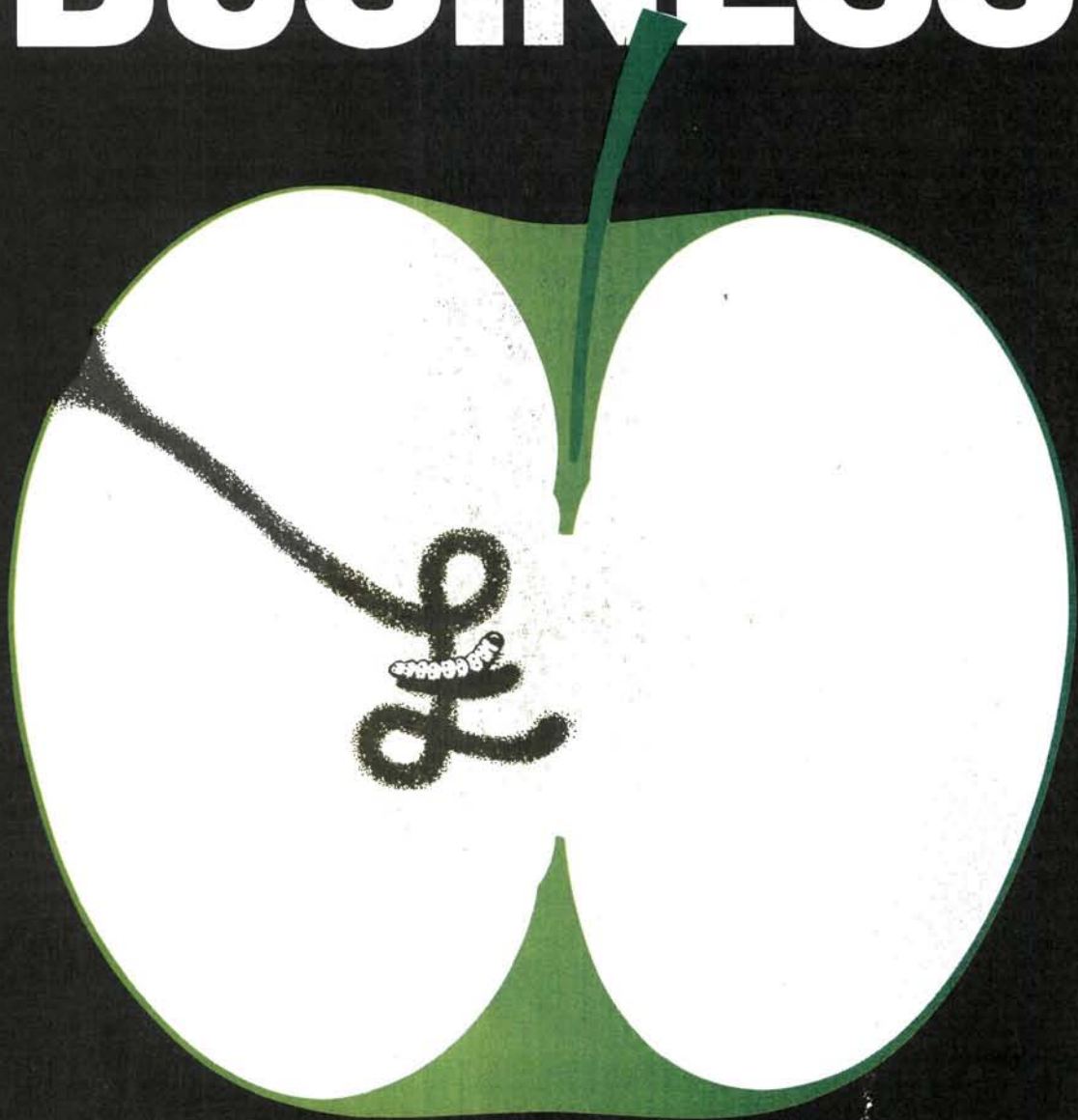


THIS FOOD BUSINESS



CHANNEL FOUR TELEVISION

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THIS FOOD BUSINESS

*Written by Tim Lang, Sue Dibb, Issy Cole-Hamilton and Tim Lobstein, all of
The London Food Commission.*

The year 1989 has seen an unprecedented rise of public concern about food. Salmonella, listeria, botulism, Bovine Somatotropin (BST), Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), cook-chill convenience foods, irradiation... Food has become national news.

Britain's consumers have been shocked to find out that chickens have been fed on dead chickens, cows are fed on dead sheep, and that, suddenly, once trusted foods are to be avoided. Yet 1989 is British Food and Farming Year, a year long festival, planned to celebrate the centenary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF). Instead, MAFF and its relationship with the food industry has been on public trial.

This booklet stresses that common sense can only be made of current British food policy by arguing the case for public health; for improved democracy; for consumers' interests over producers'; for food quality rather than adulteration; for public information and education rather than advertising hyperbole; and finally, for European standards set to a high rather than low common denominator. If the 1980s have seen food return to the national consciousness, the 1990s are a challenge to long-term change.



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What is going wrong?

Over the past 40 years there has been a food revolution in Britain. New foods and new methods of growing, processing, distributing and cooking food have arrived. Even eating has been transformed. No longer does everyone have so-called family meals all seated round a table. We have snacks between meals, buy low nutrient foods and eat on the hoof—appropriately known by the food marketers as “grazing”.

By the beginning of the 1980s, 70 per cent of the British diet comprised processed foods. This food revolution has brought great change and some benefits. There is now a wider range of foods, with greater cultural diversity, a potentially less boring diet. The vast choice of foods on the shelves bears witness to the end of the “over-cooked meat and two veg” parody of the British diet.

That is the good news. The bad news is that this revolution in food production has brought with it concern about exactly what we are putting into our bodies.

DIET AND DISEASE

It is well known that diet, along with smoking, is a major contributory factor in coronary heart disease (CHD). Despite this, Britain's rate of CHD is appalling. More than 150,000 people die from it each year, 5000 each week. It was estimated that in 1979 CHD cost the economy 29 million lost working days, and that in 1985-86 it cost the National Health Service nearly £390 million. In addition, the best medical estimate is that 35 per cent of cancers are food-related.

In 65 reviews of the connection of diet and disease, done worldwide between 1965 and 1987, there is remarkable consistency.

Sir Richard Doll, an eminent medical epidemiologist, has summarised the advice: “Whether the object is to avoid cancer, coronary heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, diverticular disease, duodenal ulcer, or constipation, there is broad agreement among research workers that the type of diet that is least likely to cause

disease is one that provides a high proportion of calories in whole grain cereals, vegetables and fruit; provides most of its animal protein in fish and poultry; limits the intake of fats and, if oils are to be used, gives preference to liquid vegetable oils; includes very few dairy products, eggs, and little refined sugar.” (See box: Diseases and dietary factors).

In the US, meat is produced from intensive feed-lot systems, whereas in the UK many cows and sheep do see grass, although pigs may not. The importance of how food is produced can be illustrated by considering meat. In its “Look after your heart!” campaign, the government is asking the public to cut down on saturated fat. Yet the fat content of intensively reared pigs is higher than that of their free-ranging cousins. In a pig (dressed carcass), the fat content is 31 per cent compared with only 1-2 per cent fat content in a free-living warthog.

RESIDUES

Another example of the importance of how food is produced can be shown in the case of pesticides. In the 1980s, there have been worldwide and sometimes heated tussles over pesticides and their impact on health. A global campaign to ban or control a so-called “dirty dozen” pesti-

cides—13 particularly persistent and hazardous chemicals—has been run by independent scientists, third world and consumer bodies.

Even the apple, a symbol of healthy eating, has come under suspicion. Daminozide, a plant growth regulator used on fruit and sold under the name Alar, is to be banned by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, and has been withdrawn in the US by its maker Uniroyal after an independent report associated it with tumours in children.

Daminozide is usually sprayed on around 7-10 per cent of the UK's apple crop and MAFF has continued to allow it to be used. Production interests appear to get the benefit of the doubt. Consumer choice, though, is limited—for example there are only two brands of organic apple juice available in the UK.

Do consumers have any reason to be concerned about the effects of pesticide residues in food? The government maintains everything is under control and the consumer faces no unnecessary risks. Critics remain unconvinced. One independent review of the scientific literature on pesticides found that of 426 pesticide ingredients approved by MAFF, no fewer than 124 were known or suspected of links with cancer, genetic damage, aller-

Diseases and Dietary Factors

Disease	Dietary factor*	% Estimates of dietary contributions to known causes of disease
Allergies	Fat, sugar, salt, fibre	5-40
Anorexia	Fat, sugar, salt, fibre	n/a
Cancer of large bowel & colon	Fibre	20-80
Constipation	Fibre	100
Diabetes	Fat, sugar, fibre	65-80
Diverticular disease	Fibre	100
Gallbladder disease	Fat, sugar, fibre	75-80
Heart disease	Fat	30-90
High blood pressure	Fat, salt	20-90
Irritable bowels	Fibre	40-80
Overweight and obesity	Fat, sugar, salt, fibre	100
Strokes	Fat, salt	20-80
Tooth decay	Sugar	100
Vitamin and mineral deficiencies	Fat, sugar, salt	100

*References are to too much fat, sugar, salt or too little fibre

Source: *Sunday Times*, July 1983, based on Office of Health Economics data

Food Poisoning

	Year	Reported cases
There has been a threefold increase in the number of reported cases of food poisoning in the past six years. Unreported cases are estimated at between ten and one hundred times the number of reported cases.	1982	14,253
	1983	17,735
	1984	20,702
	1985	19,242
	1986	23,948
	1987	29,277
	1988	41,196 (provisional)

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys

gies and irritations.

So as the sales of fruit and vegetables continue to rise—in line with nutritional advice—the consumer faces possible harm from an increased intake of pesticides. In addition, these pesticides can be environmentally damaging and are a hazard for farm workers: people handling pesticides are known to be at risk of nervous disorders and sterility.

A study conducted for the US government's Environmental Protection Agency put beef and pork into the top 15 foods to avoid because of tumour-causing residues.

From the farm to the catering kitchen, intensification of production has occurred. Additives have "enhanced" taste. New processes have arrived, such as the high-speed Chorleywood bread-making process, which replaces traditionally risen dough with chemically "improved" dough using potassium bromate to save time. On the farm, agrochemicals have replaced farmworkers. Spray-on fertilisers—"liquid hoes"—have replaced the human hand and the fallow field.

CONTAMINATION

Since the second world war, huge centralised animal production units have replaced smaller scale mixed farming. The environmental impact of this intensification is well known and the public is deeply unhappy about many intensive livestock rearing practices. Britain is at the forefront of developing methods of intensive rearing of animals and researching the forms of animal feed that can be given.

The recycling of animal waste from slaughterhouses into foodstuffs for other animals is now well documented. Other forms of waste from the farmyard may also be recycled into animal feed. According to the Veterinary Research Laboratory in Belfast, an outbreak of botulism affecting 80 cattle in Northern Ireland was caused by the herd being fed a mixture containing litter scraped from the floors of chicken battery farms, including silage, feed, faeces and chicken carcasses, and was used by farmers as a cheap source of protein. Investigators found feather, bone and muscle tissue infected with botulism.

We are the only country that has the alarming Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), a cattle disease of the central nervous system that has transferred from sheep, where it is known as scrapie, to cows. The government's own inquiry, chaired by Sir Richard Southwood, confirms that this is likely to have happened because British feed suppliers recycle sheep carcasses and feed them to cows. The BSE virus is extremely resistant to heat treatment and can be killed only by methods such as autoclaving (pressure cooking) for at least an hour. The recycling practices of the feed industry now possibly pose unnecessary health risks.

It is well established that salmonella is



*Ninety per cent of all UK eggs are produced by battery hens
(Photo: Compassion in World Farming)*

Organic Foods

A survey in 1989 of 4000 *Here's Health* readers found a keen interest in buying organic food. A third of those asked said they would pay 10 per cent more for it, and a quarter said they would pay 20 per cent more. These findings confirmed those of a survey by Friends of the Earth in 1985. And in recent years, the organic foods market has been booming.

Nevertheless, approximately two thirds of organic food sold by retailers is produced abroad. This failure of British growers to meet demand cannot be blamed entirely on the organic farmers and growers themselves, however.

The blame for the disequilibrium between supply and demand also lies with governments, past and present, which have at times treated organic farming with disdain. No longer, in theory—although Nicholas Ridley, when Secretary of State for the Environment, once described shoppers' enthusiasm for organic food as a chance for farmers to "rip off the consumer". But it is still the case that too few resources are made available to encourage growers and farmers to climb off the agrochemical treadmill. This year, for example, the Potato Marketing Board, which controls production levels, granted a mere 32 extra hectares to the quota given to organic producers.

MAFF has announced grants for organic research worth £100,000, plus a paltry £25,000 for the national organic certification scheme—a total of 0.1 per cent of the ministry's investment in agriculture as a whole. Contrast this with Sweden where £1.5 million has been spent on organic research over the past two years and £400,000 a year is given to the Swedish Organic Advisory Service.

endemic within the chicken population, an estimated 60 per cent of chickens on sale being contaminated. Meat inspectors attribute much of this contamination to poor practices at the slaughterhouse, with machines not being cleansed after an infected bird has been processed and all subsequent birds then becoming contaminated.

Over the past three years reviews in scientific literature of food poisoning and food contamination have shown that cases of listeriosis, which have an estimated one in four mortality rate, have been growing in number. Contamination of cook-chill meals by listeria has been found to be high (15 per cent in some samples). There are also concerns that cooking instructions, and particularly the use of microwave ovens, have contributed to both the listeria and salmonella poisoning epidemic.

In June this year the all-party House of Commons Social Services Select Committee reported that consumers, particularly vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, have been unnecessarily put at risk by the Department of Health's reluctance to give warnings earlier, and by its adherence to recommendations rather than regulations for temperature storage in retail outlets. The Committee made tough recommendations: a shake-up of food and health policy coordination, the lowering of maximum storage temperatures to 4 degrees centigrade, domestic fridges to be made with temperature gauges, and with better monitoring and control methods.

FOOD IRRADIATION

Food irradiation is being marketed as a technical solution to food poisoning. But irradiation stands food commonsense on its head. It kills food poisoning bacteria that can give off a smell telling us the food is off. The toxins that cause illness are left unaffected.

In effect, the consumer is being told that the food processor has failed to adopt adequate hygiene, training and control standards, and is resorting to a last-ditch technical fix. This is why many food traders are now hostile to irradiation. The process has been developed actively for the past 20 or so years, and marketed worldwide for the past 10. By this year, 35 countries had legalised it, but only 21 were using it—mostly, it seems, for export. Irradiation to sterilise medical instruments has been used for some time. Irradiating food has raised altogether different issues.

Food irradiation offers such apparent promise: extended shelf-life, which leaves the foods looking fresh without extra chemicals; and, most tantalisingly, reduced risk of food poisoning by killing pathogenic bacteria such as salmonella. Against these advantages must be set a long list of disadvantages. These include damage to nutrients, such as vitamins and

Main Types of Additives

	Approximate number
Cosmetic additives	3,640+
Colours	50
Flavours	3,500+
Flavour enhancers	7
Sweeteners	13
Texture modifiers	70
Preservatives	63
Preservatives	43
Antioxidants	13
Sequestrants	7
Processing aids	91
Total Additives	3,794+

Source: London Food Commission:
Food Adulteration and How to Beat It
Unwin Hyman, 1988.

essential fatty acids—before cooking; unresolved safety issues, such as what irradiation does to existing pesticide residues; the lack of a means to test whether food has been irradiated that would be suitable for law enforcement; and use of irradiation to cover up poor hygiene or the higher bacterial counts found when food is "going off". Food irradiation is no answer to food poisoning and could increase it.

According to a number of polls carried out over the past 18 months, including ones by Marplan and the British Market Research Bureau, around 80 per cent of consumers are against food irradiation or its premature introduction. So are the British Medical Association, the Consumers' Association, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, the farmers' unions, the Retail Consortium, and key law enforcement bodies such as the Institution of Environmental Health Officers. It is hard to find many people in favour of irradiation. Yet the government and the EEC intend to legalise it.

LEGALIZED ADULTERATION

The high level of processing of some foods, and the poor quality of the ingredients that may have been used, present the manufacturer with the problem of selling a product that may appear unattractive. Once again, technology can come to the rescue.

Miracles of chemistry tickle our taste-buds. Synthetic colours replace those lost in processing and give the illusion of real ingredients that may not be there. Taste enhancers seduce our palates. Most of these additives are purely cosmetic. This is just one way in which our food can be "adulterated"—that is, made to appear to be of better quality than it actually is—quite legally (see box, Main types of additives).

Many new food technologies have been introduced to suit the manufacturer or seller of food, rather than the consumer. Consider the issue of water being added to food. This is a very old form of fraud, yet it goes on today with the help of technologies—soaking fish in polyphosphate salt solutions to increase the water it holds, for example, or "double-glazing" prawns which are frozen and then rolled in more ice to pick up extra weight. Why sell food when you can sell water? (see box, Hams with added gelatine and added water).

FOOD INSPECTION

This year, scares about listeria in some foods, including cook-chill ready-meals and pâté, have led to calls for stricter controls. It became clear that at present there are absolutely no regulations controlling the transport and storage temperature of foods, no requirements to ensure that retailers' cold cabinet and freezer displays are working properly and indeed no need to have a thermometer on the premises. When 97 shopkeepers in Southwark, London, were questioned about correct storage temperatures, only 33 could give an answer, and of these 16 were wrong by at least 5 degrees centigrade.

Meanwhile, local authorities have too few food officers and too few resources, yet they are all the public has as a bulwark

Hams with Added Gelatine and Added Water

Product	% minimum meat	% added water	% other additives
Bristol	72	25	3
Dak	78	17	5
John West	85	11	4
Ye Olde Oak	78	18	4
Tesco	86	12	2
Marks and Spencer	78	19	3
Danoxa	83	14	3

Source: London Food Commission *Food Adulteration and How to Beat It* Unwin Hyman, 1988.

between it and unsound food. The number of port health authority officers has fallen by 25 per cent over the past ten years. Environmental health departments are also facing a staffing crisis: of some 6500 funded posts in local authorities, 500 are vacant. Approximately 300 of the 1800 trading standards officers' posts are also unfilled.

Too often the British government appears to lag behind other comparable countries when it comes to setting standards. Pesticide usage is one case, another is food additives (see boxes, Pesticides and colourings other countries ban).

Colourings Other Countries Ban

Sixteen artificial colourings are permitted in foodstuffs in the UK and Eire. As the table shows, other countries ban some or all of them.

Of 16 artificial colourings	Number banned
UK and Eire	0
Netherlands	3
Denmark	4
Belgium	5
France	5
Greece	5
Italy	5
Spain	5
Sweden	5
Switzerland	5
West Germany	5
Austria	8
Japan	9
Canada	10
Finland	10
USA	11
Norway	16

Source: M Miller, London Food Commission, 1986

Over the past five years, the prices of foods most recommended for a healthy diet have risen more rapidly than those less encouraged foods (see box, Relative price rises).

Food is a flexible item in a household's budget and therefore tends to get cut back if money is tight. Household food expenditure is affected by fixed household costs. Thus, fuel debt repayments can cut the amount of money in the household budget left to spend on food.

Price, access, availability and quality are key variables in determining inequalities of food-related health. In real life, they are linked. One study in Hampstead that compared a basket of foods recommended in a "healthy" diet with less recommended foods, found the extra cost of the "healthy" basket was 73 per cent in lower income areas of Hampstead, and 63 per cent in more affluent areas (see box, Two baskets compared).

A two-tier food market is emerging in the UK. A handful of huge, mass-market food retailers are moving upmarket, chasing the spending power of those with larger disposable incomes. Such retailing is geared to the car-owning, mobile, credit-worthy households. This trend has been criticised by some for creating a new second-tier, disenfranchised portion of the population. Others see this as retailers being forced to move with the market. Either way, the UK food retailing market has fragmented in the 1980s.

What now has to be considered is whether a new distinct third tier is emerging—a welfare-dependent "niche", serviced by welfare and voluntary agencies rather than the conventional food retail sector.

Experience in both the third world and North America shows that food welfare schemes can be used as a mechanism

for getting rid of surplus foods. In the US and Canada, these are called Food Banks. A supermarket or shop can give its "beyond sell-by date" foods to a local food bank, which then distributes the food, sometimes in parcels containing a variety of goods or sometimes on an item-by-item basis. The supermarket gets rid of unwanted surpluses and, in addition, claims tax dispensation for giving the food to a charity. Critics say this has created a new dependent, third-tier food market that is used as a conscience salve, but does nothing to resolve food poverty. Another form of this food welfare is Second

Relative Price Rises of Recommended and Less Recommended Foods, 1982-1986

Food	% price rise 1982-1986
Fish*	37
Fresh fruit*	32
Fresh vegetables*	31
Poultry*	26
Biscuits and cakes	23
Vegetable oils*	20
Bread - wholemeal*	19
Whole milk	17
Bread - white	15
Meat products	14
Sugar	13
Butter	9

* indicates foods recommended in a healthy diet

Source: Issy Cole-Hamilton, *Poverty and diet in the 1980s*, Food Magazine, Summer 1989; 5:25; National Food Surveys 1982 and 1986, HMSO 1984 and 1987.

FOOD POVERTY

Opinion polls and research show that the public is concerned about its health, and prepared to change its diet to meet new health-inspired targets. A British Social Attitudes survey in 1987 showed that 86 per cent of adults had changed to healthier eating; 37 per cent were eating less processed meat; 27 per cent were eating more fresh fruit and vegetables; 57 per cent were using less sugar; 56 per cent were grilling their food rather than frying it; and 56 per cent were eating more wholemeal bread. But it also found that cost was a major obstacle to choosing a healthier diet.

Eating habits have been altering over the past 10 years. Generally, people have been shifting their diets to meet the new dietary consensus—more fresh fruit and vegetables, wholemeal bread, and so on. But people with low incomes have been changing more slowly than those in other income groups. Pricing policies and the practices of the food industry have been mitigating against healthy eating for these lower-income families.

Two Baskets Compared for Price in High and Low Income Areas

"Healthy" basket	"Less healthy" basket
Cottage cheese	Cheese spread
Edam cheese	Cheddar cheese
Semi-skimmed milk	Whole milk
Polyunsaturated margarine	Soft margarine
Polyunsaturated vegetable oil	Ordinary vegetable oil
Wholemeal bread	White bread
Weetabix	Cornflakes
Brown rice	White rice
Wholemeal spaghetti	White spaghetti
Wholemeal flour	White flour
Tinned beans - reduced sugar	Tinned beans - added sugar
Tinned peaches in fruit juice	Tinned peaches in syrup
Low fat burgers	Ordinary burgers
Low fat mince	Ordinary mince
Low fat sausages	Ordinary sausages

Pesticides Other Countries Ban

Pesticide	WHO classification*	Use in UK	Banned
Amitrole (herbicide)	Acute hazard unlikely (but possible carcinogen)	119,000 kg/year (mainly orchards)	Sweden, Finland Norway
Azinophos-methyl (insecticide)	Highly hazardous	7,500 kg/year (fruit & vegetables)	India
Carbaryl (insecticide)	Moderately hazardous	16,000 kg/year (orchards)	W Germany
Chlordane (molluscicide)	Moderately hazardous	? kg/year (grazing pasture)	Sweden, Finland, Turkey, Portugal
Demeton-s-methyl (insecticide)	Highly hazardous	102,000 kg/year (fruit & vegetables)	USSR
DNOC (insecticide)	Highly hazardous	3,600 kg/year (soft fruits)	Sweden
Endosulfan (insecticide)	Moderately hazardous	13,000 kg/year (soft fruits)	Bulgaria
Fonofos (insecticide)	Extremely hazardous	8,500 kg/year (cereal)	Malaysia
Methomyl (insecticide)	Highly hazardous	1,500 kg/year (cereal, hops)	Malaysia
Paraquat (herbicide)	Moderately hazardous	270,000 kg/year (vegetables, fruit, cereal)	Sweden, W Germany, Finland
Pentachlorophenol (insecticide & herbicide)	Highly hazardous	? kg/year	Sweden
Phenylmercury acetate (fungicide)	Extremely hazardous	? kg/year (seeds)	Turkey, New Zealand
2,4,5-T (herbicide)	Moderately hazardous	87,000 kg/year (grazing pasture)	Sweden, Finland
Thiophanate-methyl (fungicide)	Acute hazard unlikely (but possible carcinogen)	113,000 kg/year (cereal, fruit)	Finland

* This is a classification by the World Health Organisation based on the danger of using the chemicals. The risk is assessed only for the acute danger not for the longer-term risks of developing, for example, cancer, and we have added an indication where such a longer-term risk may be apparent.

? This indicates that the amount used in the UK is unknown.

Sources: Andrew Watterson, Southampton University, 1989; Pete Snell, **Pesticide Residues and Food**, London Food Commission, 1986; Gretta Goldenman and Sarojini Rengam, **Problem Pesticides, Pesticide Problems**, IOCU/PAN, 1987.

Harvest, which may distribute cooked but unsold food from canteens or restaurants to the needy.

Besides the hygiene and financial aspects, these systems at first sight sit ill at ease in the UK's welfare tradition, but in fact the EEC has begun to institute its own version of Food Banks. In 1987's cold winter it began to distribute stored food, and has now set up a routine system of dumping surplus butter and beef. Often it is the voluntary sector that has to deal with the trade. In 1988 the majority of the voluntary sector refused to participate, arguing that the costs should be paid for by government. Food philanthropy once

more had returned to mainstream UK welfare.

THE SEARCH FOR A FOOD POLICY

Food policies are those aims and decisions that affect who gets what food, when, how, on what terms and with what effect. Part of the UK's current food policy crisis is that responsibility for food is hopelessly split and uncoordinated. In the 1980s the main overt tension has been between the bias towards producers shown by MAFF and the health of consumers, which is the concern of the Department of Health. This tension was plain for all to see in the

salmonella-in-eggs affair earlier this year where the internal conflict was made quite public and led to the resignation of health minister Edwina Currie.

Public and sometimes heated debate about food policy is nothing new. In the 18th and 19th centuries, food quality and what we now call trading standards were key issues. In the mid-19th century modern food science began with independent chemists helping to expose the routine adulteration of foods. After 50 years of public disquiet and campaigning by analysts such as Accum and Hassall, and the editor of the *Lancet*, a Food Act was drafted in 1875, and its core has remained

enshrined in our law for more than a century: "No person shall sell to the prejudice of the purchaser any article of food or any drug which is not of the nature, substance and quality of the article demanded by such purchaser of the food or drug, or conceal the inferior quality thereof."

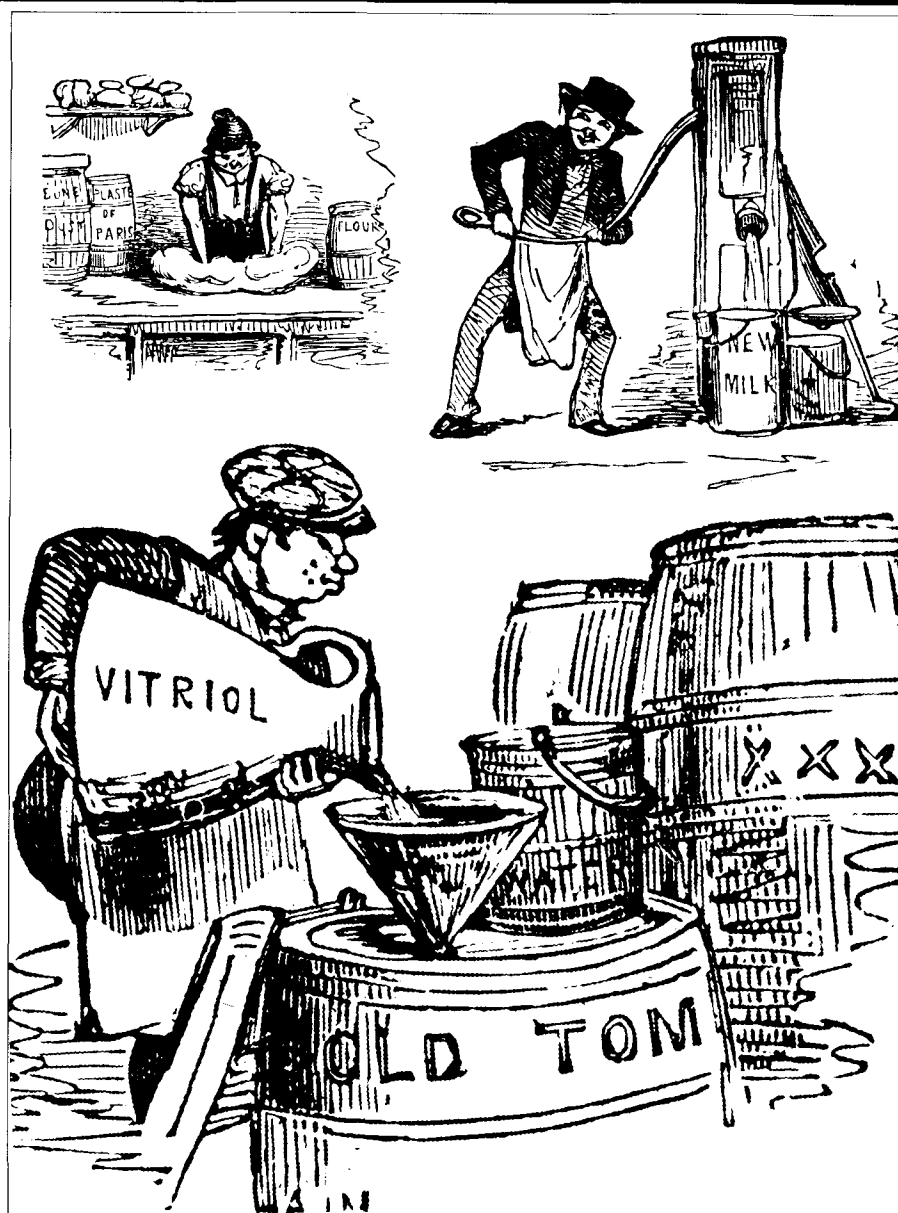
From the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, a key split in British politics was between those who argued for free trade and those favouring protectionism. Food and agriculture were central to this debate. Should Britain be a manufacturing and trading nation which fed its workforce on imported, cheap food? If there was starvation should it not be resolved by exporting the surplus population to the colonies? Should preference in imports go to the Empire? Should British farming be left to rot?

By the early 20th century, working-class dissent and liberal welfare reforms, such as state-funded school meals replacing charitable schemes, indicated a change in state food policy after the Boer War and particularly the first world war. The poor health of recruits, submarine threats to imported food trade lines, the need for more women in factories, the emergent labour movement and Labour Party, and the desire of liberal entrepreneurs to stave off dissent and improve conditions, all combined in a more interventionist state food policy. Rates could be levied to fund school meals; a Ministry of Food was set up; and market support systems developed.

After the first world war, reforms were rolled back, only to be resuscitated and expanded in the second world war. Massive evidence of malnutrition in the 1930s combined with another wartime siege economy to mark the end of laissez-faire agricultural policy. After the war, the Ministry of Food—Britain's one successful experience of a nutrition-led interventionist, equitable food policy—was wound up. But production was to be supported. Labour's Tom Williams's 1947 Agriculture Act enshrined the emphasis on production.

With the end of post-war scarcity by the mid 1950s, it was felt the major problems had been transcended. Poverty and hunger were to be banished by rising standards of living heralded by Keynesian economics. A safety net was provided by the welfare reforms associated with Lord Beveridge (himself a former key first world war Ministry of Food worker and its official historian). The food quality and adulteration issues that so concerned the mid-19th century food movement were monitored and controlled by the food law enforcement officers of local authorities. Political control passed from the Ministry of Food with its connotation of rationing and the war, to a ministry more attuned to the increasing power of the manufacturers, farmers and agrochemical companies.

Agricultural and food scientists did what they were asked to: they pushed for



Victorian cartoons portraying the adulteration of common foods

high input agriculture, not just in Britain, but throughout the industrial rich world and, through the exportation of the technology under the banner of "the green revolution", to much of the third world too. The EEC itself was founded in part on a promise never to see famine stalk Europe. The technology and industry-led food policy framework today under question was set.

The 1970s and 1980s have seen an increasing level of public concern over health and diet. While EEC food mountains were accumulating so were the figures for heart disease and obesity. Fields had been stripped of their hedges, meat production soared, the agrochemical industry boomed and the DHSS issued a pamphlet urging us to cut back on our fat and sugar consumption.

In the late 1980s new alarms over food quality have raised the whole issue of how our food is being produced. Food policy is once more a matter of national public concern. And as in the 19th century, the needs

of consumers appear to be in conflict with those of the producer. Producers have other criteria besides satisfying consumer demand. And this, it seems, shapes and determines the sorts of products they sell.

THE BATTLE FOR MARKET SHARE

The problem that faces the food industry is how to persuade us to eat more. It must find ways of inducing us to eat food of a more profitable quality, or of less substance so that we eat more often. Less (nutrition) is more (sales). The factors currently influencing sales are healthy eating, the desire for convenience foods, increased snack eating and people's desire for indulgence foods.

By developing new products to meet these growth markets, the industry can maintain its profits. But it is a risky business. With the launch of nearly 1,000 new food products every year, less than 10 per cent are expected to be around two years later. But the risk can be worthwhile. In 1988, UK consumers spent around £40.9 billion on groceries and about a further £6 billion on eating out.

Fat Substitutes

<i>Company</i>	<i>Fat substitute</i>
Arco Chemical Co (USA)	Esterified propoxylated glycerol
CPC International (USA)	Polycarboxylic acids
Ethyl Corporation (USA)	(Patent unknown)
Frito-Lay (USA)	Synthetic oils
Mitsubishi-Kasei Food Corp (Japan)	Sucrose polyester
NutraSweet Co	Simplese
Pfizer Inc	Polydextrose
Procter and Gamble	Olestra
Unilever NV	Sucrose polyester

Source: *Journal of the American Oil Chemists Society*, vol. 65 no. 11, November 1988

The development of a "health" market has also led to new opportunities. Many companies are now developing products such as so-called "fat-free fats". These are intended to look, cook and taste like fat but provide no calories. One such product is Olestra, a non-calorific fat substitute being developed by the US multinational Procter and Gamble for use in a wide range of foods. The manufacturer claims that it will be of real value to millions of people who want to reduce the fat and cholesterol in their diets.

Olestra is a type of sucrose polyester produced by chemically linking several

fatty acid molecules to a molecule of sucrose (table sugar). But because sucrose polyester is not found in nature, our bodies lack the digestive enzymes necessary to deal with it. Thus Olestra is not absorbed and provides no calories.

Is Processing Bad For Us?

Processing per se is not bad. It offers a sensible division of labour and convenience. After a long day at work, surely it is progress to be able to eat fairly easily. But processing provides the opportunity to adulterate, and sell fraud foods and hidden fat foods. We need to differentiate between sensible and unnecessary processing. We need to know what we get when we buy convenience foods.

It is intended that it could be used as a substitute for up to 35 per cent of the fat in shortening and cooking oils and for up to 75 per cent of the fat used for commercial deep-fat frying. It is also predicted that Olestra will be used in salad oil, icing and cake mixes, mayonnaise, margarine, beverages, dough and salad dressings. The market value of the product could exceed \$1 billion in the US alone.

Procter and Gamble is seeking approval in the US through the Food and Drug Administration and in the UK through MAFF. However, the US consumer watchdog, The Center for Science in the Public Interest, has reviewed the manufacturer's own test data and found that Olestra caused cancer, liver damage and other serious problems in animal tests, and that studies were inadequate.

UK campaigners have only been able to get access to this information via the US through its Freedom of Information Act. In the UK the secretive approval process means that data can only be independently reviewed after the product has been assessed and possibly approved by government committee.

Olestra is just one of about ten new "fat-free fats" or low-fat substitutes being developed, mostly by large chemical companies (see box, Fat substitutes).

Manufacturers have jumped on the vitamin bandwagon by claiming junk food is no longer junk because it now has



added vitamins!

By far the most significant change in the food economy is the growth of concentration in each food sector, so that by the mid-1980s just two or three companies were dominating the market in many foods.

In confectionery three companies, Rowntree, Cadbury and Mars control 60 per cent of the market. The savoury snacks market is also dominated by just three companies, Pepsico (Smiths and Walkers), United Biscuits (KP) and Dalgety (Golden Wonder), which jointly share 70 per cent of the market. Similarly, another three companies, Unilever (Birds Eye), United Biscuits (Ross) and Nestlé (Findus) share 64 per cent of frozen ready meal sales. Just two companies, Heinz and Campbell's dominate the canned soup market with a 71 per cent share of the market.

UK Grocers' Market Shares 1987/88

Company	Market share (%)
Tesco	14
J Sainsbury	13.9
Dee (Gateway/Fine Fare)	11.5
Argyll (Presto/Safeway)	10.7
Asda	7.6
Co-op	12.1
Total	69.8

Source: Verdict Research/Financial Times/FoodMagazine, spring 1989, page 19.

Although UK food sectors are highly concentrated, the UK is not alone. In Denmark, one of the EEC's smallest member states, more than half of the milk products market, for instance, is controlled by one company, MD Foods. In meat, a handful of companies have around 90 per cent of the market. And just one retailer has around a third of food sales. With the completion of the EEC internal market due in 1992, in each country, the big food companies are watching their European competition.

Although some European food manufacturers are very large, a recent study carried out for the European Commission pointed out that of a sample of 46 leading EEC based food companies, only half had a presence in three or more countries. As these giants fight for Euro-market share, it is vital that the public interest does not get caught in the cross-fire.

The UK food retail market is also highly concentrated. In 1961 before the self-service revolution took off, there were more than 150,000 grocery shops in the UK. There are now about 40,000. Six

The Food Industry is a Major Employer

One in seven of all workers works with food

Sector	Numbers employed (thousands)		% female 1988
	1981 ¹	1988 ²	
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	354.6	322.0	na
Food, drink and tobacco manufacturing	658.9	548.7	42
Distribution and retail:			
wholesale	251.2	259.9	35
retail	572	624.2	64
Hotel and catering ³	900.7	1148.9	66
Total in waged employment	2,737.4	2,903.7	

Notes: 1 December 1981 figures; 2 December 1988 figures; 3 includes restaurants, snack bars, cafes, pubs, canteens, hotels and so on, but not public service catering

Sources: Department of Environment Employment Gazette

major companies dominate with an astonishing 70 per cent of the market (see box, UK grocers' market shares 1987/88).

Retailers are arguably the most influential sector within the food economy. They claim that they mediate between production and consumers and that their role is set by market tastes. Reality is more complex. Retail power lies in setting specifications for producers—however big a manufacturer, it still needs to get its products on to the supermarket shelves.

In a highly competitive market, though, retailers cannot afford to ignore customer demands. When thousands of shoppers began to complain about additives in foods, supermarkets led the trend for "no additive" and so-called "natural" products. And now they are falling over themselves to be greener than green. Supermarkets can no longer claim they will stock any product, leaving the customer to decide whether to buy. Some supermarkets, for example, have decided that customer feeling is so strong that they will not stock irradiated produce.

The consumer movement worldwide is

Free to Choose?

united in the need for full and frank information about food. If consumers are uninformed or under-informed, how can there be "freedom to choose"?

In the UK, since 1984, there has been considerable pressure to agree on a form of nutritional labelling. That same year, the government's own Committee on Medical Aspects of food policy (COMA) called for it. In 1989, consumer and public health organisations are still waiting. It looks as though nutritional labelling will wait until 1992, when Europe imposes a standard scheme on the UK.

Unfortunately, labelling is not the only area where food information has been held up (see box, Information hold-ups).

Advertising is a key factor in industry's strategy to win sales and brand loyalty. It can also exclude potential competitors from entering the field. Recently, the government has spent millions in the health education field. It allocated £4 million to the heart disease oriented "Look after your heart!" campaign. Health edu-

Information Hold-ups

In 1982 the Committee on Toxicology Report on Sweeteners cleared Acesulfame K (despite the fact that data obtained under the US Freedom of Information Act suggest potential hazards). All the 34 references in COT were to unpublished studies done by Searle, the company marketing Acesulfame K.

A report from the Health Education Council (now the Health Education Authority) recommending dietary changes to combat incidence of coronary heart disease delayed for two and a half years because the recommendations opposed by the food industry. Finally published in 1983.

The Advisory Committee on Pesticides, despite meeting for many years, did not publish any reports until 1985. Now publishes summary data sheets for new pesticides but not the actual toxicological studies, and no data for pesticides already in use.

Joint DHSS/MAFF Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods, sitting since May 1982, produced report in 1986 claiming there were no special or significant safety reasons for not removing ban on irradiated foods. Report was unreferenced. Committee chairman and ministers in response to requests from MPs refuse to provide referenced report.

cation is obviously important, but health educators have been critical of advertising being used as a cheap substitute for genuine long-term public education and resources. Proper food education is more than advertisements. It would have to address skills in the kitchen, train boys and girls in schools on how to handle food, and ensure that catering workers were properly trained.

Nearly a sixth of all advertising is spent on promoting food. In 1988, the industry spent a colossal £570 million, mainly on TV advertising. Chocolate manufacturers were the biggest spenders topping the league table at £81.7 million, breakfast cereals were in second place (£61.2 million), and coffee in third place (£55.1 million) (see box, Amount spent on food advertising).

By comparison the Health Education Authority's Look after your heart campaign has found it hard to find the £2 million it has spent on advertising so far this year.

Legislation in 1984 brought about the

Amount Spent on Food Advertising in 1988

	£ m
Chocolate	81.7
Cereals	61.2
Coffee	55.1
Sauces, pickles, salad cream	29.2
Margarine	25.5
Tea	25.1
Frozen meals	23.6
Potato crisps and snacks	20.9
Sugar confectionery	19.6
Biscuits	19.0
Fresh and frozen poultry and meat	16.5
Meat and vegetable extracts	15.9
Milk and milk products	14.7
Cheese	14.3
Butter	9.7

Source: MEAL/Euromonitor

Major European Food Manufacturers

Company	Activity	Nationality	Market capitalisation approx (£bn)
Unilever	Foods, detergents, chemicals	UK/Netherlands	8.5
Nestlé	Food manufacturing	Swiss	6.5
BSN	Food and glass products	France	2.6
Cadbury Schweppes	Manufacture of confectionery and soft drinks	UK	2.2
Associated British Foods	Food manufacturing & retail	UK	1.3
Ranks Hovis McDougall	Manufacture, processing & retailing of food products	UK	1.3
United Biscuits	Manufacture & sales of food products	UK	1.2
Hillsdown	Food manufacture, furniture & property	UK	1.2
Suchard	Coffee and chocolate manufacturers	Swiss	1.1
Source Perrier	Mineral water	France	1.0
S&W Berisford	Food, financial services property & commodities	UK	0.8
Dalgety	Agribusiness, food manufacture & commodities	UK	0.7
Unigate	Manufacture & distribution of food, transport etc.	UK	0.6
Northern Foods	Manufacture of foodstuffs	UK	0.6
Tate & Lyle	Agribusiness, sugar refining, malting, distribution, insurance	UK	0.6
Booker	Agribusiness, health products, food distribution	UK	0.6
Beghin-Say	Sugar and paper products	France	0.6

Source: Financial Times/CL-Alexanders Laing and Cruickshank, November 1988

INFORMATIVE LABELLING

abandonment of regulations determining the minimum meat allowed in various meat products. In their place came a requirement that producers should simply declare somewhere on the packet the amount of meat the product contained. The result (see box on page 10, Meat content) was a substantial reduction in meat levels. In every case, the minimum meat content dropped. The average drop was from 46 per cent to 31 per cent. "Informative labelling" clearly did not protect quality in the way standards had. Meat content was replaced mainly with water or fat, but prices were not reduced to reflect the altered recipe. Removing standards created cost savings for manufacturers that were not passed on to consumers. Consumer choice was not improved—higher-meat versions of these products were no longer on offer. Britain may have the tag of the "dirty man

THE EUROPEAN CHALLENGE

of Europe", but 1992 harmonisation is an opportunity for Europe to set standards to the lowest or the highest common denominator. The British government's 1992 advertisements sold Europe as "open for business". But Europe is currently split between the vision of a strictly economic confederation and a wider, more socially responsive, vision. The food revolution's impact on public health, consumer choice and the environment lies at the heart of this debate.

And what of health? Crete has the lowest heart disease rate in Europe. In many ways, its people eat the ideal diet: low in saturated fats, plenty of fresh vegetables and fruit, and so on. Britain's health and food profile is almost the reverse of ideal. Which will 1992 bring? Crete to Britain, or Britain to Crete? The northern European diet to the south, or vice versa? This is not a new issue that

Eurocrats could be forgiven for not knowing. A classic seven-countries epidemiological study of heart disease first made the point in 1953.

From a consumer perspective, will Europe's remarkable diversity of food cultures survive or flourish in the Europe post 1992? The restructuring of European food industries before and after 1992 will have an enormous impact on food markets. Already food industries—particularly food manufacturers—are gearing up to benefit from a completed market. The European Commission in one of the largest economic studies ever undertaken has calculated that industry can receive great savings from abolishing standards (see box on page 10, Cost savings from abolishing standards).

This may be good news for giant processors, but is it for consumers, the public health or even small specialist and local processors? Certainly, the changes 1992 will bring, as well as the wider debate

Cost Savings from Abolishing Standards

Abolishing traditional quality standards will reduce the cost to manufacturers of producing foods like chocolate, ice cream, beer and pasta. Experience has shown that it is unlikely that these savings will be passed on to the customer.

Abolition of standard for traditional food	Country affected by abolition	Estimated cost saving to industry (%)
Chocolate allowed to be made with vegetable fat instead of milk	All EC countries except Britain, Denmark & Ireland	30
Beer allowed to contain additives and non traditional ingredients	Germany and Greece	22
Ice Cream allowed to be made with vegetable fat instead of cream	France, Germany, Greece & Luxembourg	12
Pasta allowed to be made with soft wheat instead of durum wheat	France, Italy & Greece	9

Source: Paolo Checchini, *The European Challenge 1992*, EC report/Wildwood House, 1988

Meat Content

Meat product	Minimum required meat content under old standard (%)	New minimum meat content declared on label after standard abolished (%)
Roast chicken and gravy	75	45
Braised kidneys in gravy	75	70
Irish stew		
Brand A	35	25
Brand B	35	15
Minced beef with onion and gravy	50	47
Minced beef and onion	50	36
Average of 22 products	46	31

Source: Shropshire Trading Standards, 1986

about "social" Europe will have an impact on the diet of Europe's poor. Consumer, environmental and public health organisations in the UK have a major challenge to help shape and not just respond to that change. Already they are linking up with similar groups in Europe. But they are poorly resourced, and badly behind. Nevertheless, there are grounds for optimism, but only if the challenge is faced. This challenge is on three fronts: democracy, food policy and consumers.

First, democracy. Changes in European decision-making offer an opportunity for improvement. The European Parliament, under powers given to it with the Single European Act 1987, can alter draft directives (laws). The European Consumer Consultative Committee sounds grand but has been described as toothless. At least it exists, though. The European Commission has also recently set up a Consumer Affairs Division, a most promising development, but currently the driving force in the Commission is Directorate-General III, charged with responsibility for removing barriers to trade by the end of 1992.

Recently the European Parliament's committee on industrial policy said that European advisory committees had too much bias in favour of producers. It called for decision-making to be more democratic and less secretive. A clear principle must be to learn from the best practices of Europe. Europe, as the advertisements say, is a challenge, but a wonderful opportunity for consumers and public health could be threatened if the lowest common denominator prevails. The complexities of current EC decision-making are illustrated in the case of additives on page 11.

Second, there is the challenge to

Food democracy - a Danish experiment

In contrast to the secret meetings of unelected committees bound by the Official Secrets Acts, the Danes have tried another approach to policy-making. Under the auspices of the Danish Technology Board, a three-day conference was held in public in the Parliament building. The conference was set up to advise the Danish Parliament on what position it should take in relation to the draft European Commission directive on food irradiation. Expert witnesses were brought to Copenhagen from all over the world; people with a wide range of positions and perspectives.

These witnesses were questioned by a 15-person lay panel chosen to be a representative cross-section of the Danish population. The panel produced a consensus document which it presented and defended in public on the final day of the conference. This document then went to the Parliament, with considerable status.

Contrast that process with what happened in the UK. Here, an appointed group of experts, under a chair who was a part-time director of a company which made radio-isotopes, and advised by a technical director of the company with near monopoly of food irradiation technology in the UK, produced an unreferenced report approving irradiation. This was put out to consultation, only after a bitter public row.

MAFF, after three years of receiving overwhelming opposition from the public, food industry, public health and food law enforcement announced in June 1989 that it was pressing ahead with irradiation without further public consultation and with no limits on which foods were to be allowed to be irradiated.

European food policy. Europe, in many British people's minds, is synonymous with the excesses of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). To give him credit, the beleaguered UK Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has spent much effort trying to curtail CAP costs, and quotas on production have been imposed. Euro-mountains of food still exist, but are smaller. They have been sold off or given to the poor. The approach that created the problems still needs reform, though. Current policy is to pay farmers to

take land out of production. But they will grow more on the remaining land. The agro-chemical treadmill remains.

There is also the imminent arrival of the biotechnology revolution. Bovine Somatotropin, BST, the drug which can increase the milk yield of cows by up to 20 per cent is the test case here. In June 1989, the UK was the only EEC country to vote against a ban on BST.

Europe lacks a sensible food technology policy, one which harnesses technology and science to meet public health and

The Additives Route

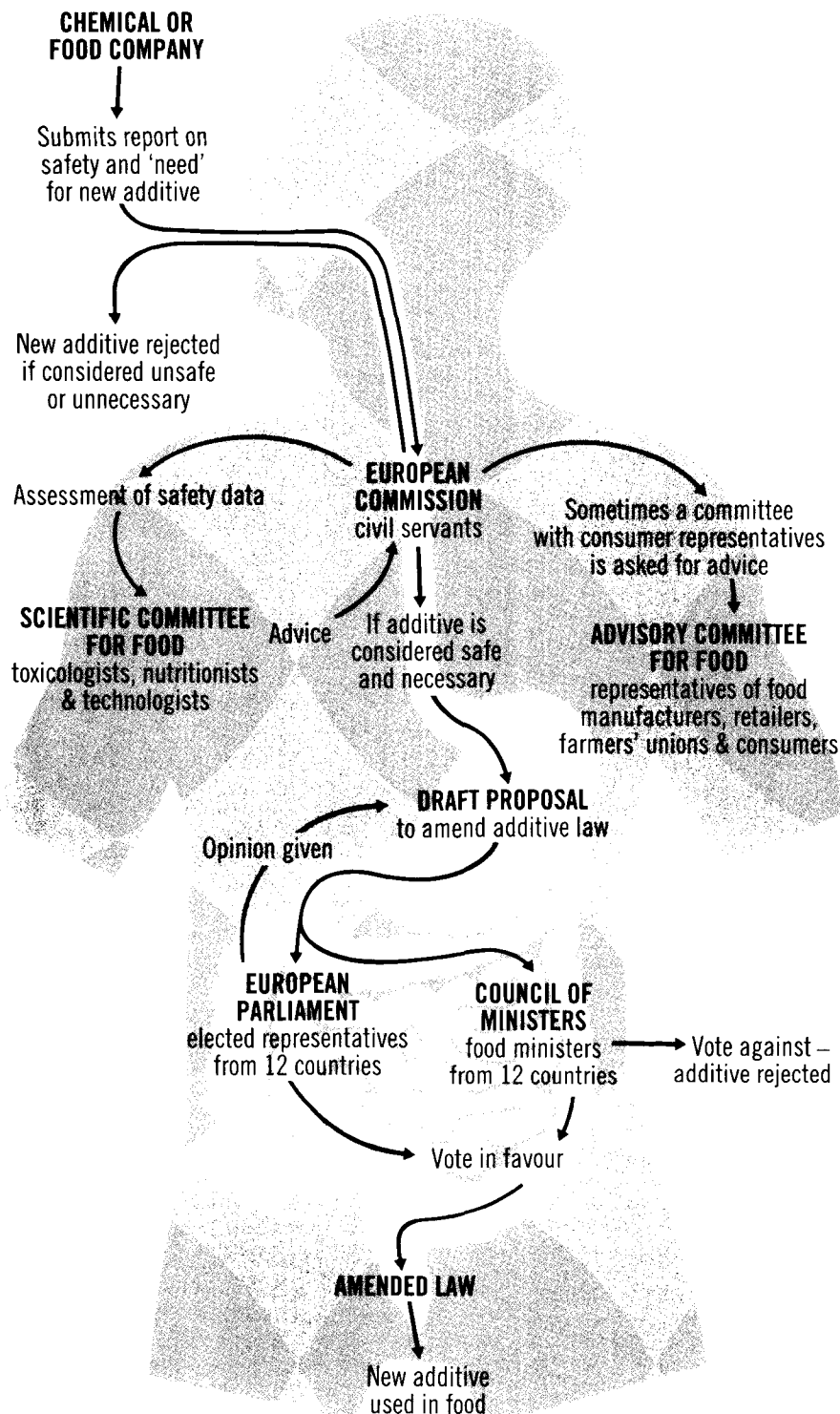


Diagram: *Which? Way to Health*, June 1989

Food Advisory Committee

The Food Advisory Committee is MAFF's key food policy committee. It has been criticised for its lack of consumer representation compared with those from industry.

Food industry related	8
Academic and medical	4
Local authority	2
Consumer advocate	1

Source: MAFF press release/*Food Magazine*, Spring 1989

consumer interests, not just those of industry. Europe needs a Common Food Policy to rise like a phoenix from the ashes of the CAP. Such a food policy would have to tackle all the issues addressed in this booklet: the growth of food company power, democracy in decision-making, setting new priorities, and ensuring they are met.

The third challenge is to us, the consumers. Ultimately, economic theory tells us, we can demand changes in supply. Reality is more complex. So often, we do not know what is going in, on and out of our food. That is why consumer organisations have such a vital role. They act as public watchdogs—scrutinising not just industry, but the politicians and civil servants whom taxpayers pay to act on our behalf.

In Europe, consumers are seriously under-represented. This should change. In the UK, we have strong and well established consumer organisations, but even they are too often excluded from decision-making. Increasingly frustrated consumer organisations are flexing their muscles on food. A new form of consumerism is emerging. Consumers are no longer happy with being told only what is the best value for money. Passive consumerism is being replaced by more active citizenship.

Global link-ups have been formed that can be remarkably successful. A major food multinational, Nestlé, has been boycotted for breaking the World Health Organisation's Code of Marketing of breast-milk substitutes. Consumer bodies collaborated on monitoring the exportation to the third world of Chernobyl-contaminated milk products. World education networks on food irradiation are pooling information and organising conferences.

These initiatives require independent agencies prepared to take up the issues of food quality and food democracy and challenge the regulating bodies and the vested interests. They argue for the public health and the public good, and to do this they need the confidence, support and participation of the public. Your confidence. Your support. Your participation.

Ten Rules for a Healthy Stomach

1 Good food goes bad

Once food has been harvested or slaughtered it begins to deteriorate in quality. To preserve it for mass distribution it has to be preserved and techniques are changing all the time. The latest method which will be introduced is irradiation. Demand full labelling on irradiated food and point-of-sale information on how long and by what means foods have been preserved. Use your purse power.

2 No one food is intrinsically good or bad

But many highly refined, processed foods now available contribute to the very poor diets of many of the population, especially teenagers and young adults. Demand high food quality specifications for all products likely to be consumed, or promoted as foods which play a significant nutritional role.

3 Don't feel guilty

So many of the problems with our food supply and the quality of our diets are beyond our control that as individuals there are limits to what we can achieve in aiming for a healthy diet. Join with other people to make local demands of your shopkeepers and farmers.

4 Learn new skills and brush up your old ones

A predominance of convenience, processed foods has meant that many people no longer know how to cook. With the demise of Home Economics in the National Curriculum this problem will become even worse. Cooking can be time consuming and tiring, especially when you have a busy life, but in terms of health it has marked benefits and can be quick. Demand better quality convenient foods at a price everyone can afford. Also demand that teaching about food and cooking be included in your local school curriculum.

5 You have a right to know what is in your food

While food labelling has improved over the past few years, it is not yet good enough. We need simple, clear, at-a-glance information about the nutritional quality of the food, the ingredients, and some information on the processes involved in its production. It is very easy to eat relatively large amounts of fats, sugar and additives without realising it if eating pre-prepared convenience foods. Demand clear, simple nutrition labelling and quantified ingredient listing on food packets and at the point of sale.

6 Food laws exist to preserve your rights

Food law enforcement officers are overstretched and under-resourced. Despite legislation that has not kept up with changing techniques, they do have fairly wide powers to protect us from deception and harm. Find out about the food laws and report breaches to your local enforcement officers at the Town Hall.

7 Shop for good quality unadulterated foods

If you can afford to, look out for organic foods and drinks. As the market grows, production will be increased and, theoretically, prices should come down. Ask your MP or MEP to support organic production and subsidies on organically produced foods to ensure that everyone can afford them whatever their income.

8 You have a right to know how new foods and chemicals are safety tested

Much of the information about food safety testing is withheld from public scrutiny either under the Official Secrets Act or as confidential, commercially sensitive data. Demand freedom of information in all areas of food production and safety testing and the loosening up of the commercial confidentiality laws.

9 More independent food research is needed

As well as properly funded government research, other major food research and educational materials should be commissioned by an independent authority funded independent research into food quality and food safety.

10 Bon appetit!

Enjoy your food, it's not going to kill you tomorrow!

A Food Policy Shopping List

1 A change of philosophy: from a priority on production to an emphasis on consumers, public health and the environment; from intensive to sustainable production; from accepting the lowest to aiming for the highest common standards; from cure of problems to prevention; from implicit to explicit food policy; from secrecy and commercial confidentiality to openness; from petty nationalism to European collaboration; from mere provision of food to food being a pleasure, a cultural celebration.

2 A reform of MAFF, and its replacement by a Ministry of Food. This to include a new Consumer Affairs Division, with full powers of audit. An annual national and European food forum should debate key food issues in public and report to a new coordinating committee on food policy.

3 A European Food Policy should formally adopt the World Health Organisation's Health for All by the Year 2000 goals and ensure that a good quality, unadulterated, uncontaminated diet is available, accessible and affordable to all.

4 Adequate resources should be given to food law enforcement and the independent monitoring of food standards before and after the removal of barriers to trade by 31 December 1992.

5 A European review of monopolies and mergers in the food trades to be undertaken and recommendations to be acted on by the European Parliament, Council of Ministers and Commission. Consumers to be properly represented on this Inquiry.

6 Public education should be a priority. Advertisements are not enough. Informed consumers are essential for a sane food policy to work. Food labels should include details of how a food is processed, how the crop was grown and treated.

7 The role of Europe's food industries in the world food trades to be properly debated.

To Eat or Not to Eat

Dietary advice	Nutritional advantages	Possible hazards	Relative risks
Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables	Good sources of fibre, vitamins, iron. Associated with lower incidence of diseases of affluence including heart disease and some cancers	Pesticides residues, nitrates, fertilisers, irradiation, chemical preservatives	At current state of knowledge the nutritional advantages probably outweigh the problems but these cannot be ignored and should still be investigated
Eat more high fibre starchy foods	Important for dietary fibre and we need both cereal and vegetable fibre as they act differently. Also important for calories, B vitamins, vitamin E, iron, calcium, and other trace metals	Pesticide residues tend to accumulate in the skin and husk of these foods. Also liable to be foods which are irradiated in future	As above. Refined fibre in the form of bran is unnecessary and can cause problems of mineral absorption as well as being a more concentrated source of pesticide residues
Eat lean meat, poultry and fish instead of fatty meat and meat products	Lower in saturated fat, salt and chemical additives. Oily fish are rich in essential fatty acids. Both are rich sources of many valuable nutrients	Factory farming involves cruelty to animals. Antibiotics and hormones used in meat production and fish may be affected by sea and river pollution. Diseased animals get into the food chain eg BSE scare. Foods commonly associated with outbreaks of food poisoning	Which ever way you look at it lean meat and fish are better than the processed alternatives. However more work is needed to reduce the use of hormones and antibiotics. Physiologically no one needs to eat the amount of meat which justifies the use of modern farming practices
Eat more dried peas, beans, dahls and other pulses	Rich in dietary fibre as well as good sources of a variety of vitamins and minerals including iron and calcium	With some varieties, ie kidney beans of any type the beans must be properly boiled to avoid poisoning by haemagglutins	Make a useful replacement for meat and meat products
Use some lower fat milks and other dairy foods	Rich, cheap sources of protein and calcium which is important, especially in women, to prevent osteoporosis	High fat varieties are rich in saturated fat. Cows now being injected with BST hormone to increase milk production and there is no way of knowing which milk is from these cows	More work is needed on BST use and milk should be labelled if BST has been used in its production
Use less cooking and spreading fats, and use polyunsaturated varieties in preference	Saturated fats are thought to be associated with heart disease and some types of cancer and unsaturated fats may have some protective effect	The effects of excess consumption of polyunsaturated fats is not clear and could have some carcinogenic effect	Low-fat spreads do not necessarily make any difference to overall fat consumption. Polyunsaturates are no lower in calories than any other margarine or butter
Limit the amount of sugar and sugary foods and drinks you have	Sugar is empty calories and is a cause of tooth decay. It is easy to consume in large quantities and may have longer term metabolic effects	Sugar substitutes have been developed and the safety testing of these has been questioned. The effects of consuming them regularly over a long period of time is not known	Weaning away from a liking or craving for sweet foods is the best way to avoid both sugar and artificial sweeteners

Resources

Food Adulteration and How to Beat It, The London Food Commission, 1988 (Unwin Hyman)

The Politics of Food, Geoffrey Cannon, 1987 (Century Hutchinson)

The Nation's Health, A Smith and B Jacobson (eds), 1988 (King's Fund)

Consumers and the Common Agricultural Policy, The National Consumer Council, 1988 (HMSO)

A Hot Potato? Food Policy in the EEC, Consumers in the European Community Group, 1987 (CECG)

The Food Magazine, Quarterly Journal of the London Food Commission

Organisations on the side of consumers

Baby Milk Action Coalition
6 Regent Terrace
Cambridge CB2 1AA
Telephone 0223-464420

Bureau European des Unions de Consommateurs
27 Rue Royale Bt 3
100 Brussels, Belgium
Telephone 010-32-2 218 3093

Campaign for Freedom of Information
3 Endsleigh Street
London WC1H 0DD
Telephone 01-278 9686

Consumers' Association
2 Marylebone Road
London NW1 4DX
Telephone 01-486 5544

Consumers in the European Community Group
24 Tufton Street
London SW1P 3RB
Telephone 01-222 2662

Coronary Prevention Group
Royal Homeopathic Hospital
60 Great Ormond Street
London WC1N 3HR
Telephone 01-833 3687

International Organisation of Consumers Unions
9 Emmastraat, 2595 EG
The Hague, Netherlands
Telephone 010-31-70 476331

London Food Commission
88 Old Street
London EC1V 9AR
Telephone 01-253 9513

National Consumer Council
20 Grosvenor Gardens
London SW1W 0DH
Telephone 01-730 3469

National Federation of Women's Institutes
39 Ecclestone Street
London SW1
Telephone 01-730 7212

National Food Alliance
National Council for Voluntary Organisations
26 Bedford Square
London WC1B 3HU
Telephone 01-636 4066

Parents for Safe Food
32 Graham Road
London W6 0LT

Pesticides Trust
20 Compton Terrace
London N1 2UN
Telephone 01-354 3860

*This document has been prepared by staff at The London Food Commission, Britain's leading independent consumer watchdog on food. For details of its activities and publications, write to:
The London Food Commission,
88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR.*